

February 22, 2023
Margaret Henderson
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Danbury, CT

Oppose: SB 1096 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CHARTER SCHOOL APPROVAL PROCESS.

Support: HB 6763 AN ACT CONCERNING AN AUDIT OF THE STATE-WIDE MASTERY EXAMINATION.

Support: SB 1093 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE CONCERNING EDUCATION.

Dear Senator McCorry, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Margaret Henderson and I live in Danbury, where we have the lowest per pupil funding in the state. I am writing about HB 6659, and specifically about funding for K-12 education in Connecticut.

- I'm the President of the Board of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, which is here to stand up for kids and education. We have 150 members and friends.
- I'm also a member of Recovery For All, a statewide coalition bringing together more than 60 community, faith, and labor organizations across Connecticut, working towards equity for all by increasing access to resources.

1) I support SB 1093 because students - and teachers - deserve smaller class sizes.

2) I urge you to oppose SB 1096 which would take away our democratic oversight over the approval and funding of new charter schools. K

3) I urge you to support HB 6763 because this bill will empower educators to “teach beyond the test” and create assessments that are appropriate for our students.

Support SB 1093:

Do I really need to explain why smaller class sizes are better for everyone?

- Finn et al (2005) found that four years of a small class in K-3 **improved the odds of graduating from high school by 80%.**
- Dynarski et al (2013) concluded that smaller classes significantly increased the probability of a student attending college, earning a college diploma, and earning degrees in a STEM field (science, technology, engineering, or mathematics).
- Bascia (2010) summarized the impacts of class size reduction, noting that teachers interacted with individual students more frequently and used a wider variety of instructional and differentiated strategies. **Students were more engaged and less disruptive** in the classroom.

In spite of research showing that small classes have huge benefits for low-income students, the U.S. is one of only four industrialized countries where schools that serve low income students have *fewer* teachers per student than wealthier schools. This is a clear example of racism and classism, and it must end.

Oppose SB 1096:

Currently, all public school funding is approved by the legislature, which is elected by voters and hears testimony from the public. This gives the public a voice in moneys being appropriated to specific charter schools. Why should we take away that democratic oversight from the legislature and the public, and hand over that decision to an appointed board? Charter schools need more oversight and accountability, not less.

I understand the frustration of charter school companies in not getting their money fast enough, but to me the *schools* and *parents* and *students* are the highest priority, not the MBA's who run the charter school companies. The existing process was established in 2015 because the charter school process was not transparent. Why would we go back? Certainly not because a handful of businesses and their lobbyists demand it. At any time, the state legislature could have passed a budget that included charter schools, and they still can.

Instead of taking funds out of our schools to fast-track the creation of new charter schools, the legislature should fully fund and staff our schools.

Support HB 6763:

Thank you for raising this bill. An audit of statewide testing is long-overdue. Time spent taking standardized tests is time that students and teachers can't be interacting and learning new things. We need to assess in a way that promotes student engagement and brings the joy back to teaching and learning. Please pass this bill and consider establishing a pilot program to move engaging and innovative assessment strategies forward

A society cannot thrive if it doesn't nurture and educate its children. Our public schools are under-resourced and our teachers are leaving the profession. Please help level the playing field for kids, no matter what neighborhood they live in. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Henderson